

SOCK MANAGEMENT

One of the most challenging parts of learning to use a prosthesis is mastering sock management. Your limb is always changing volume and can be affected by diet, exercise, hydration, and even temperature. As your limb shrinks you will add sock(s) to take up the space in your socket and make sure it fits just as snug as it did on day one. If your limb were to swell, you would remove the sock(s) to allow for the proper fit in the same way. This is the basic concept of sock management. Sounds easy, right? Don't be fooled... it can take some time to master this process. The hardest part is learning what these new feelings in your limb mean, and how they relate to your socket fit.

Typically, your limb is going to shrink after surgery. There is swelling that subsides and muscle, which atrophies. These changes can be pretty drastic in the first few months after surgery. Your limb should change less and less the further from amputation you get – but it may continue to fluctuate slightly for the rest of your life. Sometimes your limb will get larger, too. Things like weight gain, increased muscle mass and even pregnancy have a definite impact on your residual limb. Simply adding and subtracting the number of socks you wear can keep your socket fitting properly and keep you comfortable all day long.

Sock management is basically a trial and error process. If you think you may need to add a sock then do so. If it helps, you know you are headed the right way. If it feels worse, then take it off and try reducing the number of socks you are wearing. You can also cut socks to tighten either the bottom part of the socket, or perhaps just the top half of the socket near your knee – whatever combination of socks it takes to get comfortable.

Some signs that you may need to add/remove socks:

- Something just doesn't feel "quite right" in your socket
- Feeling like you are bottoming out – or putting too much pressure on the end of your residual limb
- Feeling "wobbly" or "loose"
- Pistoning up and down in the socket with each step
- Pain/redness around the bones in your knee
- Tingling sensation in the end of your limb when letting your prosthesis dangle
- Throbbing

If you are unable to get comfortable, don't hesitate to call and schedule an appointment. Sock management can be a learning curve and sometimes there may be more significant adjustments needed. Remember, we are always here to help.